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LIKE THE KING RULES THE GRADE III JEFF RUBY STEAKS ON ROAD TO DERBY

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, March 27, 2021) – M Racing Group's Like the King surged in deep stretch under jockey **Drayden Van Dyke** to win Saturday's 50th running of the \$250,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (Grade III) at Turfway Park.

Trained by **Wesley Ward**, Like the King received 100 points on the Road to the Kentucky Derby for his victory in the 1 1/8-mile race over the synthetic Tapeta surface.

Like the King was relegated to seventh in the early stages of the race as **Moonlite Strike** opened up a two-length advantage on the field into the first turn through opening quarter-mile fractions of :22.93 and :46.81. On the backstretch, Moonlite Strike continued to lead but received pace pressure from **Gretzky the Great** through a six-furlong time of 1:11.65. Meanwhile, Like the King began his rally to the front. By the quarter-mile pole, the colt made his charge to the lead and took clear advantage in the last 1/16th of a mile to win by one length.

"I got together with my agent (**Gary Stevens**) and Wesley and we decided to change up the tactics a bit today," Van Dyke said. "We went back and watched some replays of this horse and thought he doesn't really like to be up in the race. It ended up working out well for us. With moving my tack to Kentucky, this is a huge confidence booster going into the Keeneland meet."

"We spaced out some of his races and I think it's helped because he's a big, rangy colt," Ward said. "He's always showed an affinity for grass and that's why we kept him on the Tapeta surface this winter with this race in mind. I'm glad this came through and worked out with Gary (Stevens). Now that he became an agent for Drayden, it's special to partner to win this race. Growing up I always idolized Gary and it was a good combination to get us to this win today. We were in the Derby once before but had post 20 and Mr. Tabor wanted to scratch. Now that we're here again it's very exciting."

The top four finishers received points on a 100-40-20-10 scale for the May 1, \$3 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI). Like the King was the 7-1 fourth-choice in the betting and paid \$16, \$7.60 and \$5.60. **Sainthood** with **Gerardo Corrales**, paid \$9.40 and \$6.60. **Hockey Dad** with **Rafael Bejarano** in the irons, returned \$6.20.

Hard Rye Guy, **Gretzky the Great**, **Moonlite Strike**, **Dyn O Mite**, **Awesome Gerry**, **King's Ovation**, **Smiley Sobotka** and **Tarantino** completed the running order.

Like the King earned \$145,700 for his victory in the Jeff Ruby Steaks. This was his second win in five lifetime starts and sports earnings of \$195,420. He was bred in Kentucky by **Horseshoe Racing**.

Tarantino, the 5-2 post time favorite, broke awkwardly from the starting gate and was not in contention throughout the running of the race.

"He broke so slow from the gate that it was over going into the first turn," jockey **Florent Georux** said. "I just took care of him after that."

Hush of a Storm, the \$100,000 Battaglia Memorial winner, was scratched from the Jeff Ruby Steaks in favor of next Saturday's \$800,000 Blue Grass (GII) at Keeneland, according to trainer **Bill Morey**.

There was a jockey's objection in the stretch of the Jeff Ruby Steaks lodged by runner-up finisher Sainthood against winner Like the King. Following a stewards' review, the objection was dismissed.

One race prior to the Jeff Ruby Steaks, **Godolphin's Adventuring** earned 50 points on the Road to the Kentucky Oaks Championship Series with a two-length win in the \$150,000 Bourbonette Oaks.

Ridden by Geroux and trained by **Brad Cox**, Adventuring covered one-mile in 1:37.31.

"She showed a lot of class today getting black-type," Geroux said. "She seems to be moving in the right direction with this level of competition. She's won on the dirt at Fair Grounds and now on the Tapeta. I think she could run well on the turf, probably, too."

Adventuring was the 5-2 favorite and returned \$7.20, \$5 and \$3.60. **Spritz**, with Corrales in the saddle, held second and paid \$24.60 and \$11.60. **Candace O** and Bejarano finished third and paid \$5.60.

The top four finishers in the Bourbonette Oaks received 50-20-10-5 points toward the April 30, \$1.25 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI). **Oliviaofthedesert**, **Wait for Nairobi**, **Forever Boss**, **Roll Up Mo Money**, **Into Vanishing**, **Speeding** and **California Lily** completed the order of finish.

Earlier in the card, **Williamson Racing's Visitant** held off the late charge of favored **Set Piece** to win the \$150,000 TwinSpires.com Kentucky Cup Classic (Listed)

Trained by Morey and ridden to victory by **Deshawn Parker**, Villanelle covered 1 1/8 miles in 1:50.12.

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“He loves this track. He can run well at any distance, too,” Morey said. He won at 5 ½ furlongs way back when he broke his maiden at Golden Gate Fields. We moved to Kentucky almost two years ago and it’s the hot spot for racing, sales, everything. Kentucky is really the epicenter for everything. Turfway has a great surface to race on with big, competitive fields.”

In the \$100,000 Rushaway (Listed), Godolphin’s **Cave Hill** tracked the early lead of **Extrasexybigdaddee** to win by two lengths.

Trained by **Brendan Walsh**, Cave Hill covered the 1 1/16 miles in 1:45.52 with jockey **Declan Cannon** in the irons.

“He got in a really good rhythm going onto the backside,” Cannon said. “Going into the far turn he took a big breather and I knew he still had a lot of energy left in him.”

Cave Hill paid \$8.60, \$5.20 and \$3.20. Extrasexybigdaddee with Corrales returned \$10.20 and \$4.40. **Editor in Chief** rounded out the top three finishers and paid \$4.60 with **Brian Hernandez Jr.** up.

In the \$100,000 Latonia Stakes, **Full of Run Racing’s Dreamalldreamofu** split horses in the late stages of the one-mile event to win by three-quarters of a length.

Ridden by Geroux and trained by Cox, Dreamalldreamofu covered one-mile in 1:36.95.

Dreamalldreamofu was bet down to the 2-1 favorite and returned \$6.40, \$4.40 and \$3.80. **Color Me Pretty** and Bejarano paid \$16.80 and \$9.80. **Rogue Too**, with **Rogelio Miranda** in the saddle, returned \$6.60.

“Flo gave her great ride,” owner **Dann Glick** said. “She really stepped up today. She’s improved a lot as a 4-year-old and as you can tell in the paddock and on the track she has her quirks to her.”

In the \$65,000 Animal Kingdom, **Breeze Easy’s Outadore** rallied late in the stretch under Corrales to win the 6 ½-furlong race.

Trained by Ward, Outadore returned \$3.80, \$2.60 and \$2.40. **Gagetown** got through late to finish second under Geroux and paid \$2.80 and \$2.60. **Nicky Two Shoes** finished third under **Brian Hernandez Jr.** and paid \$4.80.

“I think he’ll be better sprinting,” Ward said. He still had a tough time getting through that traffic. It’s a beautiful day and maybe the track is a little sticky. He’s goal has now turned to sprinting.”

Saturday was Turfway Park’s closing day of their meet. Action in Kentucky switches to Keeneland on Friday, April 2.

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